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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Thirtieth session

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: St. Vincent and the Grenadines

A. Introduction

1. The Committee considered the initial report of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (CRC/C/28/Add.18) at its 796th and 797th meetings (see CRC/C/SR.796-797), held on 2 June 2002, and adopted* the following concluding observations.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the State party's initial report and the written replies to its list of issues (CRC/C/Q/SVG/1). The Committee notes the constructive dialogue it had with the State party's high-level delegation.

B. Positive factors

3. The Committee welcomes the strengthening of the State party's health-care infrastructure.

4. The Committee welcomes:

(a) The State party's abolition of the death penalty for all persons below age 18;

* At the 804th meeting, held on 7 June 2002.

(b) The setting up of a family court under the Domestic Violence Act of 1995 to deal specifically and speedily with cases of domestic violence;

(c) The programme to strengthen parental skills and empower the family.

5. The Committee notes, in addition, the State party's good cooperation with NGOs.

C. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention

6. The Committee notes:

(a) The difficult geographic and demographic conditions of the State party;

(b) That difficult socio-economic conditions place limitations upon the State party's financial and human resources;

(c) That severe unemployment has led to high emigration, leaving many single parent and grandparent headed households;

(d) That poverty and long-standing economic and social disparities have a negative impact on respect for the rights of individual children.

D. Subjects of concern and the Committee's recommendations

1. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6 of the Convention)

Legislation

7. While noting that the State party has begun, within the framework of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), a process of harmonizing its legislation with regard to children and the family, the Committee is nevertheless concerned that this process is slow, that some existing legislation is outdated and does not fully take into consideration the Convention's principles and provisions, and that there has not been a general review of legislation of direct relevance to children since before the State party ratified the Convention.

8. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Continue and strengthen its ongoing efforts to conduct a general review of the conformity of its legislation with the principles and provisions of the Convention;

(b) Where needed, amend existing legislation or adopt new legislation with a view to strengthening the legislative framework for the implementation of the Convention and, in this context, make every effort to proceed with the OECS (and partners') programme for the harmonization of laws relating to families and children (as described in the replies to the list of issues);

(c) Proceed with the commitment, as mentioned by the delegation, to consider the adoption by Parliament of a rights-based children's code, compiling the main elements of domestic legislation of direct relevance to children and incorporating the provisions and principles of the Convention, including the best interests principle;

(d) Seek technical assistance from UNICEF and OHCHR.

Implementation, coordination, national plan of action and monitoring

9. While noting the establishment of the National Committee on the Rights of the Child, the adoption of the National Youth Policy, that the Ministry of Social Development, Cooperation, the Family, Gender and Ecclesiastical Affairs is the institution charged with ensuring the coordination of governmental bodies working to implement the Convention, and the State party's adoption of a new programme of action in cooperation with UNICEF for the period 2003-2008 with a set of defined priorities, the Committee remains concerned that:

(a) The State party lacks a clearly defined and comprehensive child rights policy and plan of action for implementation of the Convention;

(b) Coordination of implementation of the Convention between different government ministries remains insufficient;

(c) There is no effective independent mechanism which can receive and act upon complaints of child rights violations, including complaints from children.

10. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) With a view to integrating the child rights perspective of the Convention into all relevant programmes and activities, strengthen its children's rights policy and develop a national plan of action for the implementation of the Convention, ensuring that it is prepared through an open, consultative and participatory process;

(b) Strengthen the coordination of State party efforts to implement the Convention, including through strengthening the resources of those organs with a coordinating role and through the use of multisectoral programmes;

(c) Establish an independent structure to receive complaints of violations of children's rights which has the authority and capacity to receive and investigate individual complaints in a child-sensitive manner and address them effectively, such as through empowerment of the National Human Rights Association;

(d) Seek technical assistance from UNICEF and OHCHR.

Resources for children

11. The Committee is concerned that the State party has not fully complied with the provisions of article 4 of the Convention in terms of the allocation of resources for the implementation of the Convention.

12. **With a view to strengthening its implementation of article 4 of the Convention, and in the light of articles 2, 3, and 6, the Committee recommends that the State party prioritize budgetary allocations to ensure implementation of the rights of children, to the maximum extent of available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international cooperation.**

Data collection

13. The Committee joins the State party (as indicated in the replies to the list of issues) in expressing concern at the lack of an adequate data collection mechanism and the absence of up-to-date, comprehensive and accurate data.

14. **The Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) Establish an effective mechanism for the systematic collection of disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data incorporating all the areas covered by the Convention and covering all children below the age of 18 years;

(b) Make use of indicators and data in the formulation of policies and programmes for the effective implementation of the Convention;

(c) Seek technical assistance from, inter alia, UNICEF.

Dissemination of the Convention

15. Noting the efforts made, including through annual celebration of the month of May as the Month of the Child, and with the strong involvement of NGOs, the Committee remains concerned that additional progress needs to be made by the State party with regard to dissemination of the Convention.

16. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Strengthen its efforts to disseminate the principles and provisions of the Convention, as a means of sensitizing society on children's rights;

(b) Undertake systematic education and training on the provisions of the Convention for all professional groups working for and with children, in particular administrative personnel, parliamentarians, judges, lawyers, law enforcement officials, civil servants, municipal and local workers, relevant personnel working in institutions and places of detention, teachers and health personnel, including psychologists and paediatricians, and social workers;

(c) Seek technical assistance from, inter alia, UNICEF.

2. Definition of the child (art. 1 of the Convention)

17. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) A variety of different ages and related terms are applied to children within the State party and that these can lead to confusion with regard to the implementation of the Convention;

(b) The difference in the minimum legal age of marriage for girls (15) and boys (16) is discriminatory and both ages are low.

18. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Clarify the ages and terms applied to children;

(b) Raise the minimum legal age of marriage of girls to the one of boys (16).

3. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the Convention)

Discrimination

19. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) The Constitution of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines does not fully reflect the provisions of article 2 of the Convention and, in particular, does not specifically prohibit discrimination on the grounds of language, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status;

(b) With reference, inter alia, to the findings of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, there are occurrences of racial discrimination affecting children, including the children of some minorities, such as the Amerindians and Asians, who form a disproportionate proportion of the population with lower-income levels;

(c) Children with disabilities are de facto discriminated against by the absence of specific legislation to cater for their special needs and to provide them with appropriate facilities, and by the absence of effective policies and programmes to facilitate their integration into regular schools;

(d) Children who are known to be infected with HIV/AIDS are discriminated against at school by some teachers.

20. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Amend its legislation, including the Constitution, to ensure that it fully corresponds with the provisions of article 2 of the Convention and to ensure the full implementation of non-discrimination provisions, giving special attention to children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, to children with disabilities and to racial discrimination;

(b) Adopt legislation providing for the protection of the rights of children with disabilities, including with regard to the provision of special services and facilities for children in need of such support.

21. **The Committee requests that specific information be included in the next periodic report on the measures and programmes relevant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child undertaken by the State party to follow up on the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and taking account of General Comment No. 1 on article 29.1 of the Convention (aims of education).**

Best interests of the child

22. Noting the recognition of the best interests principle in the Adoption and Domestic Violence Acts, the Committee remains concerned that the principle is not fully recognized and implemented in other relevant legislation and in decisions relevant to children, including with regard to education and health.

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that the best interests principle is reflected in all relevant legislation, policies and programmes, and otherwise in the implementation of the Convention.**

Respect for the views of the child

24. While noting the State party's efforts to ensure child participation, including through a mock parliament and debates in school, the Committee remains concerned that children have limited opportunities in school, in courts, administrative processes or in the home to express their views.

25. **In the light of article 12 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that children's views are given due consideration in courts, schools, relevant administrative and other processes concerning children and in the home through, inter alia, the adoption of appropriate legislation, the training of professionals working with and for children, and the use of information campaigns.**

4. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8, 13-17 and 37 (a))

Name and nationality

26. The Committee is concerned that many children born out of wedlock do not know the identity of their father, inter alia, because of societal pressures that cause mothers to be reluctant to file a paternity action.

27. **Noting the supportive role that the Department of Family Services is already playing in this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party further facilitate and support the activities (including paternity procedures) which will contribute to the full implementation of the rights of children to know their parents.**

Ill-treatment and other forms of violence

28. The Committee is deeply concerned that corporal punishment is widely practised in schools, in the administration of justice, in other institutions and within the family, and that it is regulated by law and used against children from an early age.

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party urgently:**

(a) Prohibit through legislative and administrative provisions the use of corporal punishment in all contexts, including in schools, in the administration of justice, in other institutions and within the family;

(b) Make use of information and education campaigns to sensitize parents, professionals working with children and the public in general to the harm caused by corporal punishment and to the importance of alternative, non-violent, forms of discipline, as provided for in article 28.2 of the Convention.

5. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 18 (paras. 1-2), 9-11, 19-21, 25, 27 (para. 4) and 39)

Family environment

30. Noting the assistance provided to families, inter alia, by the Public Assistance Board under the Ministry of Social Development and through the Ministries of Education and Health, the Committee remains concerned that:

(a) A large proportion of Vicentian families are living in poverty;

(b) The difficult domestic employment situation has obliged many parents, and sometimes both parents, to migrate, leaving children in the care of grandparents or under the responsibility of an older child;

(c) Almost half of all families are headed by women single parents and their related poverty places children in these families at particular risk of violations of their rights;

(d) Mothers are only able to claim child maintenance for a child aged over 5 if the claim process was initiated before the child reached the age of 5, and there are disparities between the child maintenance awards made to the children of unmarried mothers (domestic court) and married mothers (magistrates court).

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Make every effort to provide support to children within the context of the family and consider, inter alia, means of improving employment prospects within the State party for parents;

(b) Give particular attention to the situation of children in single parent families, especially families headed by mothers, and to grandparent and child-headed families;

(c) Strengthen its efforts to secure child maintenance payments in adequate amounts, ensuring also that there are no disparities between those accorded to the children of married and unmarried mothers;

(d) Implement the recommendations made in paragraphs 238 to 240 of the State party's report;

(e) Consider ratifying the 1973 Hague Convention No. 23 on the Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions relating to Maintenance Obligations.

Alternative care

32. Acknowledging the State party's efforts to establish an adequate foster care service, the Committee is concerned that:

(a) There is no legislative basis for foster care procedures;

(b) The alternative care services for children who have been abandoned by, or who are otherwise separated from, their parents are not sufficient;

(c) In some instances of "adoption" (especially international adoption), children are handed over for money or with promises of financial assistance to those giving up the child.

33. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Establish a legal basis for alternative care, including foster care;

(b) Make use of existing structures, urgently establish alternative care procedures which can provide support, including long-term solutions where needed, for children separated from their parents;

(c) Give particular attention to the possibility of abuse of adoption procedures for trafficking in children and consider, inter alia, strengthening monitoring of intercountry adoption and ratifying the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption;

(d) Seek assistance through international cooperation, including from UNICEF.

6. Basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (para. 3), 23, 24, 26, 27 (paras. 1-3))

34. While noting the progress made in the area of child health care, including in the numbers of health centres established and their staffing levels, the Committee remains concerned at:

(a) The lack of basic medicines to meet the needs of sick children;

(b) Infant mortality rates;

(c) Levels of undernutrition;

(d) The gradual rise in obesity;

(e) The lack of an adequate number of dentists available to children.

35. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Continue and strengthen its ongoing efforts to establish community health clinics in the countryside, and ensure that these and all other medical facilities are adequately stocked with appropriate basic medicines;

(b) Continue and strengthen efforts to reduce infant mortality and undernutrition and take preventive action to avoid a rise in the rates of obesity among children;

(c) Increase the numbers of dentists available to treat children.

Children with disabilities

36. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) The State party's statistics on the numbers of children with disabilities may be incomplete and, in particular, do not take into consideration those children who hardly ever leave their homes;

(b) Children with disabilities, including learning disabilities, are not integrated, as a matter of policy, into regular schools and that an insufficient number of teachers have received specialized training in this regard;

(c) Some children with disabilities are often obliged to remain at home and do not have access to many public buildings as a result of physical barriers such as stairs.

37. **In the context of the Committee's comments under section 3 of these concluding observations, and taking note of the United Nations Guidelines on Disabilities and the results of the Committee's day of general discussion on the rights of children with disabilities (6 October 1997), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Conduct a survey to identify the exact number of children with disabilities, including children who stay at home, and the causes of, and ways to prevent, disabilities in children;

(b) Ensure the integration within the State party's child rights policy of the rights of children with disabilities with regard to, inter alia, non-discrimination, participation, survival and development, health, education (including vocational education for future employment) and integration into society;

(c) Ensure access for children with disabilities to public transportation and public buildings, including all schools and hospitals;

(d) Train additional teachers to teach and counsel children with disabilities;

(e) Strengthen the assistance, including financial assistance and counselling, provided to the families of children with disabilities;

(f) Seek international cooperation from, inter alia, UNICEF, in this regard.

Abuse and neglect

38. Noting the recent establishment of the Register of Child Abuse, the annual celebration of Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month and the active involvement of the Department of Family Services as the body that receives and handles reports of child abuse and neglect, the Committee remains concerned that:

(a) The instance of child abuse, including sexual abuse, is high and, as noted in its report, the State party has made insufficient efforts to address this concern;

(b) The abuse, including sexual abuse, of children often occurs within the family, committed by parents and siblings, and is often hidden;

(c) Some perpetrators of sexual abuse are able to pay money to the families of victims to avoid prosecution and even to perpetuate the abuse;

(d) There are many cases of neglect of children by parents, including the late presentation of a sick child at a hospital or clinic;

(e) Only the police and not the social services have the authority to remove a child from a family situation in which the child is suffering abuse or neglect, and this may add to the trauma suffered by the child.

39. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Undertake a study on the scope and nature of child abuse and neglect;

(b) Address the abuse, including sexual abuse, and neglect of children, giving particular attention to their occurrence within the family, through, inter alia, developing a strategy and programmes of prevention, response and support to victims;

(c) In the context of the Committee's recommendation under section 1 of these concluding observations:

(i) Strengthen further the capacity of the Department of Family Services and the work of the Register of Child Abuse;

(ii) Establish effective child-sensitive procedures and mechanisms to receive, monitor and investigate complaints, and to intervene where necessary;

(iii) Train teachers, law enforcement officials, care workers, judges and health professionals in the identification, reporting and management of cases of ill-treatment;

(d) Consider giving the necessary legal authority to the social services to take urgent action to protect children from abuse;

(e) Strengthen its efforts to prosecute persons responsible for perpetrating abuse and provide medical help and counselling to those perpetrators in need of such assistance;

(f) Take all necessary measures to prohibit payment and acceptance of money with the purpose of perpetrators of sexual abuse against children avoiding prosecution, and prosecute the persons concerned;

(g) Provide child victims of abuse with appropriate medical and psychological support, including recovery and social reintegration assistance for child victims and their families;

(h) Strengthen the education provided to young parents in the care and early attention they should give to their sick children and in the prevention of abuse and neglect;

(i) Take into consideration the recommendations the Committee adopted on the occasion of its days of general discussion on children and violence (CRC/C/100, para. 688, and CRC/C/111, paras. 701-745);

(j) Seek assistance from, among others, UNICEF and the World Health Organization.

Adolescent health

40. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) Adolescents face health risks, including from sexual exploitation, maltreatment, drug and alcohol abuse, and HIV/AIDS;

(b) The rate of teenage pregnancy is high.

41. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Increase its efforts to promote adolescent health, including mental health, policies, particularly with respect to reproductive health and substance abuse and health education in schools, ensuring the full participation of adolescents;

(b) Consider means of reducing teenage pregnancy, including strengthening reproductive health education for adolescents, and ensure the provision of full health and counselling support for pregnant girls and that these girls are able to continue their formal education.

7. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28, 29, 31)

42. While noting the significant increase in the numbers of pre-schools for children between the ages of 3 and 5 and efforts to set minimum standards for these schools, and noting also the increase in the proportion of trained teachers in primary and secondary schools (as indicated in the replies to the list of issues), the Committee remains concerned that:

(a) Pre-schools are not regulated by the Government, buildings are insufficiently equipped and personnel inadequately trained;

(b) The proportion of untrained teachers in primary schools remains high - approximately 25 per cent of the total;

(c) Despite passage of the 1992 Education Act, compulsory primary education is not yet enforced;

(d) The number of children passing the secondary school entrance examination is extremely low;

(e) Children have insufficient access to books and other reading materials.

43. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Adopt legislation regulating pre-schools, including with regard to the standards of buildings and other facilities and the training of staff, and continue its current efforts in this regard;

(b) Continue the progress made so far in providing training for primary school teachers;

(c) Follow through with its commitment, as expressed by the delegation, to enforce compulsory education requirements from September 2002 and to consider raising the age of compulsory education from 14 to 16;

(d) Review the system of secondary school entrance examinations and take action to address problems identified, with a view, inter alia, to raising significantly the numbers of children graduating from primary to secondary school;

(e) In the light of the Committee's General Comment on article 29.1 of the Convention and the aims of education (CRC/GC/2001/1), take measures to strengthen the accessibility, quality and management of schools and take action to address problems identified;

(f) Continue its ongoing efforts to increase the computerization of schools, and ensure that all children have access to appropriate books and other reading materials;

(g) Seek technical assistance from UNICEF and UNESCO in this regard.

8. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 38-[illegible] (b)-(d), 32-36)

Economic exploitation

44. The Committee:

(a) Is concerned at the child labour situation;

(b) Joins the State party in expressing concern that existing legislation with regard to working children is outdated and provides insufficient protection to children;

(c) Notes that data with regard to child labour are scarce.

45. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Undertake a survey to assess the scope and nature of child labour in all sectors;

(b) Conduct a review of legislation with regard to working children and amend it to ensure its compatibility with the principles and provisions of the Convention, and adopt and implement ILO Convention No. 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment;

(c) Take action to implement all legislation and policies relevant to addressing child labour concerns and protecting the rights of children in the context of their economic exploitation.

Street children

46. While noting the establishment of a programme to reintegrate street children into their families (as indicated in the replies to the list of issues), the Committee remains concerned at the situation of street children and at the lack of relevant data in this regard.

47. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Undertake a study on the scope and causes of the phenomenon;

(b) Create a legislative framework and continue and strengthen its ongoing efforts to assist street children, including with regard to their reintegration into their families.

Sexual exploitation and abuse

48. The Committee is concerned:

(a) At the sexual exploitation of children, including boys and including street children, for payment;

(b) That the State party lacks accurate data and an adequate policy in this regard.

49. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Undertake a study to examine the sexual exploitation of children, gathering accurate data on its incidence;

(b) Develop an effective and comprehensive policy addressing the sexual exploitation of children, including the factors that place children at risk of such exploitation;

(c) Implement appropriate policies and programmes for prevention and for the recovery and reintegration of child victims, in accordance with the Declaration and Agenda for Action and the Global Commitment adopted at the 1996 and 2001 World Congresses against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

The illicit use of drugs and substances

50. The Committee is concerned that:

(a) The illicit use of drugs and substances by children is increasing, including the use of crack cocaine and marijuana, as well as other substances, and that some of the children abusing drugs and using substances are placed, for this reason, in mental health institutions;

(b) The State party lacks adequate data and treatment programmes in this regard.

51. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Undertake a survey on the scope of substance abuse by children, including the collection of data;

(b) Take action to combat substance abuse by children, including through public education campaigns, and ensure that child drug and substance abusers are not placed in mental institutions unnecessarily and have access to effective structures and procedures for treatment, counselling, recovery and reintegration.

Administration of justice

52. While recognizing the State party's efforts in this domain the Committee remains concerned that:

(a) The age of criminal responsibility, fixed at 8 years of age, is too low and that juvenile justice protections are not afforded to all persons under the age of 18;

(b) With only very limited exceptions, the State party does not provide legal assistance to children, and that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are frequently left without such support;

(c) Children are sometimes forced by the police to confess to criminal offences when they are held in custody at police stations, and are sometimes subject to ill-treatment;

(d) Juveniles are not usually deprived of their liberty as a "last resort" and, because legislation does not provide a sufficient range of sentencing alternatives to deprivation of liberty, juveniles and young people, especially from 16 years upwards, are sometimes sent to prison when a lesser punishment could have been applied;

(e) Children who have been charged are detained with adult persons charged with crimes, in police stations and for long periods of time, because there are no juvenile criminal detention facilities;

(f) Children who are charged jointly with adults are tried in regular courts;

(g) There is no institution used exclusively for children where children purging a prison sentence can be sent, that the "Approved Schools" provided for in the Juvenile Act do not exist and that, as a consequence, convicted children over 16 are sent to adult prison;

(h) The Corporal Punishment of Juveniles Act allows for the caning of juveniles who have been found guilty of crime.

53. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Significantly raise the age of criminal responsibility and ensure that all children under the age of 18 benefit from the special protection measures recognized by juvenile justice standards;

(b) Ensure that all children benefit from free legal assistance in the context of juvenile justice proceedings;

(c) Ensure that deprivation of liberty is used only as a last resort and that provision is made for adequate alternatives to deprivation of liberty, such as community service orders;

(d) Ensure the protection of child detainees from ill-treatment and/or being forced to make confessions by the police;

(e) Establish a system through which children who are detained or imprisoned are separated from adults, and establish alternative institutions to prisons, suited to the education and rehabilitation of delinquents;

(f) Urgently prohibit the corporal punishment of children in the context of the juvenile justice system;

(g) In this regard and in the light of the Committee's day of discussion on juvenile justice, develop mechanisms and provide adequate resources to ensure the full implementation of juvenile justice standards, in particular articles 37, 40 and 39 of the Convention, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules) and the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines);

(h) Seek assistance from, inter alia, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Centre for International Crime Prevention, the International Network on Juvenile Justice and UNICEF, through the Coordination Panel on Technical Advice and Assistance on Juvenile Justice.

9. Optional Protocols

54. **The Committee encourages the State party to ratify the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and on the involvement of children in armed conflict.**

10. Dissemination of the report, written answers, concluding observations, and the next report

55. **Finally, in the light of article 44, paragraph 6, of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the initial report and written replies submitted by the State party be made widely available to the public at large and that the publication of the report be considered, along with the relevant summary records of the discussion and concluding observations adopted by the Committee. Such a document should be widely distributed in order to generate debate and awareness of the Convention and its implementation and monitoring at all levels of administration of the State party and among the general public, including concerned non-governmental organizations.**

Reporting

56. **In the light of the recommendation on reporting periodicity adopted by the Committee at its twenty-ninth session (CRC/C/114, chap. I), the Committee, aware of the considerable delay in the State party's reporting, underlines the importance of a reporting practice that is in full compliance with the provisions of article 44 of the Convention. An important aspect of States' responsibilities to children under the Convention includes ensuring that the Committee on the Rights of the Child has regular opportunities to examine progress made in the implementation of the Convention. In this regard, regular and timely reporting by State parties is crucial. The Committee recognizes that some States parties experience difficulties in initiating timely and regular reporting. As an exceptional measure, in order to help the State party catch up with its reporting obligations under the Convention, the Committee invites the State party to submit its second and third reports in one consolidated report by 24 November 2005, which is the required date of submission of the third periodic report. The Committee expects the State party to report thereafter every five years, as foreseen by the Convention.**